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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DJIBOUTI 000761

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/06/23
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [MASS](#) [DJ](#) [ER](#) [SO](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: DASD AND FONMIN DISCUSS REGIONAL SECURITY

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

1.(C) Summary: In a wide-ranging discussion, visiting DASD for Africa Vicki Huddleston thanked Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf for Djibouti's excellent partnership with the United States and outlined key security priorities in Africa for the new U.S. Administration. For his part, Youssouf described Djibouti's (1) eagerness to see the U.S. Africa Command support African institutional capacity; (2) conviction that the Somali TFG needs urgent military assistance to survive an onslaught from violent extremists; (3) request for sanctions to counter Eritrea's destabilizing role in the region, including its increased infiltration of armed elements into Djibouti; and (4) concern over prospects for Sudan in the coming years. Septel reports on Youssouf's favorable response when DASD Huddleston informed him of the USG intention to renew the implementation agreement for use of Camp Lemonier for an additional five years (2010-2015). End summary.

¶2. (U) Visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa Vicki Huddleston met June 15 for approximately one hour with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf. DASD Huddleston was accompanied by Joint Staff Deputy Director for Africa Brigadier General Wade Farris, OSD/P/ISA/AF Director for East Africa and the Horn Shoshanna Matney, and Ambassador. Youssouf was accompanied by MFA Director of Bilateral Relations Mohamed Ali Hassan.

U.S. Security Priorities in Africa

¶3. (U) DASD Huddleston outlined security priorities in Africa for the new U.S. Administration. They are: (1) Addressing directs threat to USG security from violent extremists, with a focus on Somalia and the Sahel; (2) Stopping/preventing genocide and humanitarian catastrophes, with a particular focus on Sudan; (3) Supporting post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization, with a focus on countries like Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and (4) Building African security capacity through the African Union (AU), its sub-regional organizations, and key anchor states, such as Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa.

¶4. (C) Foreign Minister Youssouf reacted positively to these priorities, saying he welcomed this more "holistic" and "human" approach to defining the continent's security challenges.

¶ 15. (C) Invited to comment on the Africa Command, Youssouf urged it to focus on building African security capacity. He estimated it would take at least another five years to establish truly functional African Union defense structures, including the stand-by forces, early-warning systems, etc. Meanwhile, the AU needed urgent support in funding, logistics, training, and capacity building. The AU's shortcomings in the security arena have been evident in the difficulty it has faced in its deployments in Somalia and attempts to address conflicts in the Great Lakes, he said. An Africa Command role would be especially welcome to back up AU and other African efforts to address such security challenges.

Somali TFG Needs Military Assistance

¶ 16. (C) Turning to Somalia, Youssouf said the situation had "calmed down a little bit" after the severe threats to the TFG in mid-May, thanks to financial and logistical support provided to the TFG by

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the USG, Djibouti, and others. (Note: he made this comment prior to the heavy fighting June 18-19 in Mogadishu. End note.) Youssouf averred that the TFG can defeat the extremists, but needs adequate military equipment to do so. He recommended providing the TFG with small armored vehicles, light weapons, air surveillance (e.g., helicopters) and other assets that would give advantage to the TFG forces. (BG Farris suggested that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) would be a cheaper and more practical alternative to helicopters.)

Eritrea Must be Stopped from Destabilizing Region

¶ 17. (C) As part of regional efforts to support the TFG, Youssouf noted that Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ministers had called for physical measures (e.g., port blockade) to prevent weapons shipments into Somalia, as well as sanctions against the Eritrean Government (GSE). This position has been endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council. In addition to its support for al-Shabaab, the GSE is also seeking to undermine Djibouti by "kidnapping" disaffected young Afars, training them in Eritrea, and infiltrating them back into Djibouti. (Note: This is the first we've heard that the Afars have been "kidnapped;" all other reports indicate they have been recruited voluntarily.

¶ 18. (C) Based on debriefs of 2 or 3 defectors from among the Afar recruits, the GODJ has learned that the GSE has trained recruits at a camp called "Kindo" (phonetic) located between Assab and Bore (NFI). Approximately 60 recruits have been infiltrated into Djibouti, 10 near Randa in the center-west, and 40-50 in the east. The GODJ is actively lobbying Arab League members to stop financial flows to the GSE, and favors an asset freeze and travel sanctions on Eritrean leaders and firms to add pressure for withdrawal from Djiboutian territory seized during last year's border skirmish and an end to Eritrea's other destabilizing activities in Djibouti, Somalia, and elsewhere in the region.

¶19. (C) Efforts to reach out to GSE President Isaias have proven unsuccessful. Even Libyan Leader Moammar Khadafi's three-day visit with Isaias following the January AU summit elicited no signs of flexibility from Isaias. The Libyans now joke, Youssouf said, that while they've progressed, Isaias is acting the same way Libya did in the 1970s.

Deteriorating Situation in Sudan as South's Leadership is Weak

¶10. (C) In response to DASD's question about links between Eritrea and Sudan, Youssouf noted Isaias's penchant for supporting opposition groups in neighboring countries. Youssouf said he has heard Asmara recently trained Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces. Prior close relations between the GSE and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) are strained due to a dispute over \$6 million in funds held by John Garang in Asmara that the GSE now refuses to acknowledge or return.

¶11. (C) Youssouf warned of the deteriorating security environment in South Sudan. He asserted that some European powers (NFI), influenced by business interests, appeared to favor a split of the south from the north. The situation in the south is complicated by an "intricate tribal problem." Youssouf lamented that First Vice President Salva Kiir has proven to be merely an "executive," not a "leader." At this delicate time in South Sudan, "a leader is missing."

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¶12. (C) Comment: This meeting was a useful tour d'horizon of regional issues, and underscored that Djibouti's major national security concerns remain Somalia and Eritrea. The DASD visit helpfully reinforced that the USG understands these GODJ concerns. Djibouti is an important security partner for the United States, as the port used for resupply/refueling of some 50 U.S. naval vessels per year and as host to Camp Lemonier (the only U.S. military installation in sub-Saharan Africa). On this, her first visit to the continent since assuming her new functions, the DASD showed our strong commitment to this partnership.

¶13. (C) DASD Huddleston has cleared this message.
SWAN